

# CAB Investigates Bonanza Crash, Sudden Plunge of Pan Am's 707

Washington — Civil Aeronautics Board last week started investigations of the crash of a Bonanza Air Lines Fairchild F-27 near Las Vegas and an 11,000-ft. dive by a Pan American World Airways Boeing 707-320C over the Pacific.

The F-27 crashed into a 3,700-ft. high ridge while on an approach through a heavy snowfall toward McCarran Field, Las Vegas. The crew of three and 26 passengers were killed in the accident, which occurred at 8:27 p.m., Nov. 15. It was Bonanza's first fatal accident in 18 years of operation.

Position of wreckage indicated the aircraft was on a proper heading for the runway, which is at a 2,171-ft. elevation 9.5 mi. from the impact point. When the aircraft disappeared from the ground radar scope, visibility was being reported as a half mile, which is below Bonanza's three-quarter mile visibility minimum for McCarran Field.

The flight was No. 114 en route to Las Vegas from Phoenix via Prescott and Kingman, Ariz. Both intermediate points were overflown because of weather conditions. The captain, Henry Fitzpatrick, was appraised periodically of the worsening situation at McCarran, CAB spokesmen said. But he indicated at no time whether or not he intended to abandon his approach, they said.

Ceiling and visibility dropped rapidly in the unseasonal snowstorm, going from a 600-ft. ceiling and 5-mi. visibility at 8:12 p.m. to about 500 ft. and one-half mile at the time of the crash. Other pilots in the area at the time were reporting only traces of aircraft

icing, leading investigators to discount this as a possible contribution to the accident.

Two other aircraft had abandoned approaches to McCarran shortly before Flight 114 entered the area. One, a Western Air Lines Douglas DC-6B, failed to make visual contact and returned to Los Angeles. Another Bonanza flight inbound from Los Angeles also attempted an approach, then returned to Ontario, Calif.

CAB investigators said the aircraft's flight recorder was recovered intact and sent to Washington for examination.

The Pan American incident involved Flight 818 inbound to Los Angeles from Honolulu with 102 persons aboard. The aircraft was about 35 min. from landing and the crew was going over the descent checklist while cruising at 37,000 ft. It suddenly nosed over and entered a "violent maneuver of unknown attitudes," recovery finally being made at 26,000 ft.

Preliminary investigation indicated that a circuit breaker had opened during the checklist procedures, shutting off what spokesmen termed "essential electrical power." When the dive came the autopilot was engaged and the altitude-hold was on. The incident occurred in smooth air, and weather was not considered a factor.

No passengers were injured and a normal landing was made at Los Angeles. Examination revealed no damage to the aircraft structure, although a heavy gravity load resulted during the pull-out. The CAB investigation will involve particular attention to the autopilot, spokesmen said.